



Leader's Growth Group Homework Guide

For the week of November 26, 2017

(This guide is designed to give helpful hints in preparing & leading your group in discussion)

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

⇒ **GROWTH GROUP FEEDBACK FORMS** - Distribute forms and allow 10 minutes for people to fill them out. **Please have all of your forms turned in by Sunday, December 3.** We encourage you and your host to look over them before you turn them in.

⇒ **CONFIRM ANY CHANGES, ADDS OR DROPS WITH YOUR GROUP**

⇒ **LET YOUR GROUP KNOW NEXT QUARTER'S DATES** -Winter Quarter: Jan 14 - Mar 17,
Winter Signups are Jan 6 & 7, 13 & 14 on all campuses and online.

Because this is the last meeting of the Fall Quarter, the homework is shorter than normal. As usual, your final meeting will include a look back on how God has worked this past quarter, communion, and time to complete Feedback Forms. Our winter Growth Group Quarter will begin the week of January 14, 2017. Have a great few weeks off celebrating the birth of our Lord! Merry Christmas!

***Note about this week's study:** This week's homework celebrates how God has worked this past quarter and the sacrifice Jesus made for us by taking Communion. **Most of your time should be spent on the "My Story #2" and "Communion" sections.** My Story #2 also creates a good transition into Communion. If you have time, feel free to use these questions, but don't feel obligated. You can make that transition after the "My Story" section or after either of the questions in the "Digging Deeper" section. Make sure you have supplies for Communion.*

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything new you learned or anything that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. Given the facts that there will be work to do in heaven (Genesis 2:15 & John 5:17) and that heaven will be a place of paradise (Luke 23:43), if you could pick any work to do in heaven that would be ultimately fulfilling, what would it be?

Genesis 2:15

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

John 5:17

¹⁷ In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."

Luke 23:43

⁴³ Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

***Examples:** Builder, architect, worship leader, soldier, gardener, right hand man to God. This could be hard to answer for some people but is safe for the group to discuss. Feel free to skip this question and focus on My Story #2.*

***Additional Question:** If you were painting a picture of heaven and hell, what colors, pictures, people (be nice) and things would you use?*

2. As you look back on this quarter, what are one or two things about your Growth Group experience that you have appreciated most? (It can be time spent together, how your group has encouraged you to continue to live your life for Christ, something new you learned, a service project, spiritual breakthrough, growth challenge or anything else.) *This question is a great opportunity to connect as a group.*

***Additional Question:** What's one thing you're thankful for this holiday season? You can have everyone answer if you feel it appropriate.*

DIGGING DEEPER

1. This weekend Christopher talked about heaven and asked the question, "If heaven is for real, what kind of emergency does that put on you?" While many of us believe in heaven, it's easy to get caught up in our daily lives and view heaven as something far off. How do the following verses address heaven and being ready, and how might that challenge the idea of heaven being far off?

Matthew 24:44 ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

God's coming at an hour we don't expect.

***Expanded:** Matthew 24:42-51*

Matthew 24:42-51

⁴² "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

⁴⁵ "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' ⁴⁹ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹ He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

1 John 2:28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

“John brings up a challenging image. When Jesus returns, some people will be afraid because they never knew Jesus at all. But among those who know Him, some will not be afraid, they will be ashamed before Him at His coming. They will realize that they have been living worldly, unfruitful lives. In one moment, the understanding will overwhelm them that whatever else they accomplished in life, they did not abide in Him as they could have.” -Guzik

Romans 13:11-14 ¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh. *The return of Jesus is sooner than we think. Stay away from dark things and walk in God's light.*
Additional Verse: *1 Peter 4:7* ⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.

Given the specifics of your life, your relationships and your ministry, what might being ready for heaven look like for you?

Example: *Be more intentional with my kids or neighbors, spend less money on “things” and be more generous.*

2. Throughout Scripture we see God's great desire to have his children (us) with him in heaven. The picture often given is one of a loving shepherd taking care of and looking for his lost sheep. The role of shepherd is also one we can emulate as we look after and care for “lost” people. What principles of good and bad shepherding are found in the following verses that could help us shepherd as well?

Matthew 9:11 ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

The Pharisees failed to take care of their flock. Their focus was so much on religious ritual that they missed their purpose. 1 Peter 5:2-4 would be great to read as a follow up to Matthew 9:11.

Additional Verse: *1 Peter 5:2-4*

“Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”

Matthew 9:36-38 ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a

shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*How do we view lost people? Homeless? Addicted? No motivation? God's response was one of compassion.*

Matthew 10:16 ¹⁶ “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. *God, our shepherd, understood the danger of what he asked his followers to do. Here we're presented with an interesting simile and told to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Snakes, (although many times associated with Satan) are a symbol of being subtle, crafty and shrewd. Doves are often a symbol of innocence, peace and hope. Both are important and one is lacking without the other.*

Ezekiel 34:1-6 The word of the LORD came to me: ² “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? ³ You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. ⁴ You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. ⁵ So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. ⁶ My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them. *Good shepherding often involves sacrifice for our flock and takes leadership*

How might the above verses help you focus your interactions with lost people?

As you think through your school, work, neighborhood or home, can you think of any lost person/people who need(s) a shepherd?

Can you think of any reasons that keep you from pursuing lost people?

Examples: *Intimidated by talking to people, don't feel you know enough about the Bible.*

Additional Question: *Is there a shepherd you'd like to have a bigger role in your life? Can you think of anyone who's help shepherd you in your life? Why do you think God describes us as sheep? What motivates you to reach out to lost people?*

THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

As followers of Christ, we are able to celebrate the Christmas season because we can know that our belief of the amazing gift God has given us is on “solid ground” – the gift of his son Jesus, born that we might have life through his death and resurrection! Jesus is always knocking on our door to remind us that he brings us grace and life. Communion is about remembering just that. Your time together this week will conclude by taking Communion and remembering this great gift God has given us through his son Jesus.

To prepare for Communion, read Luke 2:1-7, Luke 22:19-20 & John 15:12-17.

Luke 2:1-7 - In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ²(This was the first census that took place while^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Luke 22:19-20 - ¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”^[a]

John 15:12-17 - ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

What catches your attention as beneficial to remember as you take Communion in your group?

Communion

1) Explain that we want to end the quarter by celebrating Christ and his death and resurrection by taking Communion. Communion is all about remembering the great love God has for us by sending his son Jesus to die that we might have life.

2) Read Luke 2:1-7 and Luke 22:19-20, John 15:12-17 and then give people a chance to reflect and share what they wrote down about what they are thankful for in regards to what Jesus has done for them based on this week’s study & teaching.

Alternatives for sharing what they are thankful for – Have them share their thanks through prayer or through doing advent together. You could suggest including their responses to Digging Deeper #1 or #2.

Advent Option – Have 6 to 12 candles on the table in the middle of the group. Middle candle is lit as the Christ Candle. Before someone shares they take a candle and light it with the Christ Candle and then share what they are thankful for from this last quarter and/or thanks for what Jesus has done for them. All the candles lit represent the light of Christ we have in us and its impact to the world when we live out this thankfulness. Other alternatives are, you could play or sing some Christmas Carols like “O Come All Ye Faithful” to add to the evening. Using the list of Christmas carols and Scriptures below, sing the Christmas carols taking turns reading the Scriptures between songs. End your time lighting the candles and sharing as suggested above.

Video/Music Option: You could also play this picture video of “O Come All Ye Faithful” or “O Holy Night” sung by Chris Tomlin while people take Communion and use for a time of reflection and worship.

O Come All Ye Faithful - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOGjftygi14>

O Holy Night - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vp0XkQfMJEM>

3) Pass the bread, thank the Lord for it, and eat together. Pass the cup, thank the Lord for it, and drink together.

IDEAS: You may want to involve others by asking them to read Scripture and lead these prayers. The bread and juice can also be set on a table in the middle of the room and people take Communion after you read the Scripture and pray, or while the group sings or listens to a worship song.

4) Close your time in prayers of praise.

Feedback Forms

Give everyone some time to fill out the forms and collect them.



YOU'RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Thanks for all you have done to make a difference in our community this past quarter. Below are a few more great opportunities that you may want to consider for yourself and/or for your Growth Group:

❖ **Christmas Outreach Tree:**

Beginning November 25, stop by the Christmas Outreach Tree on your campus and choose an ornament. Presents listed on the ornaments include toys, sports equipment, diapers and baby blankets, along with items for parents in need and local homeless shelters. Return the unwrapped present to your campus by December 10 with the ornament and help make a difference!

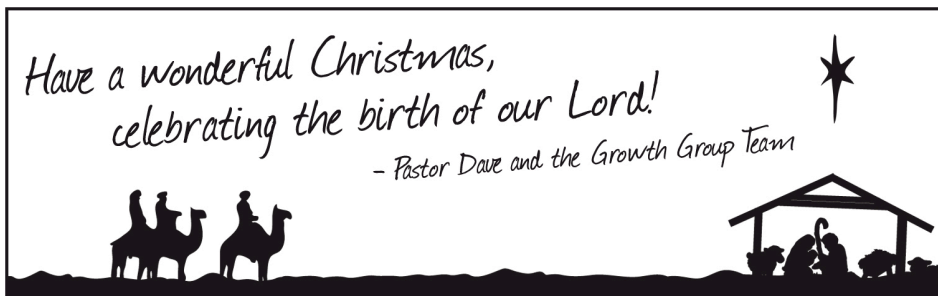
❖ **Gift Sorting Day:**

Volunteers are still needed for our special "gift sorting" day on Monday, December 11, at the Vista Campus. We'll take all the donated gifts from Christmas Outreach Tree and sort them for our organizations to pick up. Be a part of this fun day and help make an amazing Christmas for many North County families! To sign up, go to NorthCoastCommunityService.org and search for "gift sorting."

❖ **Adopt A Family For Christmas – North County Lifeline:**

Your help can make all the difference for a family this Christmas. For low-income families, holiday dinner and gifts for their kids can be an impossible dream. Make their holiday special with toys, clothes and gift cards in order to guarantee a festive season. To sign up, go to NorthCoastCommunityService.org and search for "adopt."

As the New Year begins, watch for more opportunities to serve as a Growth Group and make a difference in our community in the name of Jesus.



SERMON SERIES: IDENTITY THEFT
Message #7: Heaven: *Identity Restored*
John 14

Pastor Christopher Hilken
North Coast Church
November 25-26, 2017

Heaven *Identity Restored*

"Heaven is that remote music we are born remembering." - C.S. Lewis

"To visualize heaven accurately, study the Bible continually." - D. Jeremiah

"Nothing is more often misdiagnosed than our homesickness for Heaven." - R. Alcorn

What is heaven?

What will heaven be like?

Who will be there?

But until then...

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Advent Songs

O Come All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him,
Born the King of angels;

(CHORUS)

O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O Come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
Glory to God
All glory in the highest;
(CHORUS)

✿ **Read Luke 2:8-12**

The First Noel

The first Noel the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night. *Refrain*

Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord;

That hath made heaven and earth of naught,
And with his blood mankind hath bought. *Refrain*

✿ **Read Luke 2:13-15**

Silent Night

Silent night Holy night All is calm all is bright
'Round yon virgin Mother and Child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth;
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

✿ **Read Luke 2:16-18**

Sing Angels We have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high, Singing sweetly o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strain
Glo-ria... in excelsis Deo. (repeat)

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing.
Come adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord the newborn King
Glo-ria... in excelsis Deo. (repeat)

See Him in a manger laid, Whom the angels praise above;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, While we raise our hearts in love.

✿ **Read Luke 2:19-20**

LIGHT THE CHRIST CANDLE

Sing Joy To the World

Joy to the World, the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King.
Let every heart, prepare Him room
And heav'n and nature sing (3x)

He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of His righteousness,
and wonders of His love,
and wonders of His love,
and wonders, wonders of His love.

✿ **Read Matthew 1:22, 23**